

# OXFORD

## MAGAZINE

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No. 467 Eighth Week Trinity Term 2024

There is a sense of imminent change at the moment. There is the forthcoming general election: but it is widely recognised that, due to financial constraints, any alternative new government will have limited opportunity for radical policy changes and the expectation is that the current problems facing universities will remain unaddressed for some time. Then there is the notably more momentous forthcoming Presidential Election in the United States with its global consequences, including possible escalating world-wide military conflict and even thoughts of civil war. Universities in the USA are ahead of us in terms of student protests over Gaza, institutional closures and the threats to academic freedom and free speech which university leaders have as yet failed to confront.

Change is all around us in Oxford itself. Encampments by students protesting over the University's investments with links to Israel continue in Radcliffe Square and at the Museum of Natural History. Through her video messaging the Vice-Chancellor has maintained a steady, non-confrontational course, pleading for mutual respect in the context of the right to protest. According to press and police reports the arrests of the students who briefly occupied the University Offices were justified due to the forceful entry involved. She argues that the University is indeed doing what it can to prepare to assist Gaza when the war with Israel ends and that, as a "University of Sanctuary", we are already welcoming refugees.

Equally importantly, Congregation has suddenly re-emerged from its recent prolonged moribund state. It started with the sudden announcement over the Easter vacation of changes in the process of election of the new Chancellor, as a result of Chris Patten's retirement. A motion in opposition was hurriedly organized but, in the

## A PIVOTAL MOMENT?

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event was not needed (see below). Then, at the start of this term, Questions were submitted by members of Congregation on the University's Israel-linked investments, answers to which were duly published in the *Gazette* and read out in the Sheldonian in fifth week.

In fifth week the *Gazette* contained lengthy proposals for major structural reform of Statute XI together with a proposal to refer a

member of Congregation to a Redundancy Panel. The first of these raised widespread concerns on the grounds that the new Statute would give the Proctors greatly increased, and yet vaguely defined, powers to act in matters of student discipline. A Notice of Opposition (signed by 16 Congregation members and including a flysheet outlining these concerns) was published in the seventh week *Gazette* and will have been debated in the Sheldonian on Tuesday of this last week of full term. In response to another Notice of Opposition (with five names) the Proctors agreed that the second item could be held over until a tenth week meeting. At that same meeting specific amendments to Statute XI will be voted on and a resolution opposing the impending implementation of a decision to abolish all graduate application fees will also be debated.

In March 2020 students had successfully campaigned for Congregation to decide to abolish all graduate admission fees on the grounds of equity for applicants with limited financial resources. Those now arguing against this Congregation decision are doing so on several grounds including: "Abolition of the graduate application fee will result in very large increases in applications.... These increases will place an intolerable burden on already over-worked academics and admissions staff." In the case of the Statute XI reforms a similar argument is involved: [Since] "more of these complex cases [of serious miscon-

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*...and much more*

duct by students] are now being reported, a range of legislative and procedural improvements are necessary to prepare for further increases that we expect to receive.”

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All of these actions in Congregation involve changes that are both fundamental to how we govern ourselves and significant in respect of their implications for the rights and conditions of staff and students. In the case of the Statute XI reforms students will be subject to increased disciplinary controls; students’ rights to protest could, for example, become compromised by the new penalties that can be applied where their actions (in Oxford or elsewhere) or utterances are deemed to have caused reputational damage to the University.

The proposal to refer a member of Congregation to a process that would be likely to bring about their involuntary redundancy is a truly pivotal moment. This would be the first time that a member of Congregation was subject to this particular process and it would be setting a precedent which ought to be of concern for many staff members, perhaps particularly those in academic-related jobs less essential to the University’s core functions, including jobs that could be affected by the cost-saving efficiencies promised by AI. The fact that the individual is a ‘college’ employee in no way lessens the implications for University employees because the college, St Cross (like Kellogg and Reuben), is statutorily a University ‘department’.

The first conclusions of the Vice-Chancellor’s Pay and Conditions Review are soon to be announced. It is unlikely that any of the changes proposed will affect those other large staff groups that are subject to redundancy (e.g. workers, such as post-doctoral researchers, whose jobs terminate at the end of their contracts) or to precarity (e.g. the numerous “casual” college lecturers whose short-term jobs may or may not be renewed).

Beyond Pay and Conditions we should perhaps be more concerned about eliminating the inefficiencies that blight our lives. Our administrative structures are so complex – and staff so overburdened with far too many demands – that no one person can understand them, let alone oversee their effective running. The ability of Congregation to monitor policies and challenge Wellington Square secrecy is restricted by outdated and unnecessary barriers; e.g. dependence on new policy announcements only made available in the *Gazette* (now digital-only and correspondingly less widely read), minimal advance warning or adequate explanation of central University decisions, deadlines that prevent adequately considered discussion of complex changes requiring Congregation approval, the antiquarian requirements in submitting paper signatures. This is the digital (and homeworking) age! It is a sad reflection of our times that some may, one suspects, hesitate to raise issues and speak freely out of fear of jeopardizing their job prospects or the support of their line manager.

T.J.H

## How to initiate Congregation actions

### *How to trigger a debate or discussion in Congregation*

It is open to any 20 or more members of Congregation to propose a resolution or topic for discussion at a meeting of Congregation; requests must be made in writing to the Registrar not later than noon on the 22nd day before the relevant meeting. Any 2 or more members of Congregation can submit an amendment to, or announce an intention to vote against, a resolution or a legislative proposal (*i.e.* a proposal to amend the statutes). Notice must be given to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 8th day before the meeting.

### *Questions and replies*

Any 2 or more members of Congregation may ask a question in Congregation about any matter concerning the policy or the administration of the University. Requests must be submitted to the Registrar (in writing) not later than noon on the 18th day before the Congregation meeting at which it is to be asked. The question and the reply (drafted by Council) will be published in *Gazette* in the week prior to the relevant meeting. The answer is also formally read out at the meeting. Supplementary questions are allowed.

### *Postal votes*

Attendance at meetings of Congregation tends to be low. Postal voting can potentially allow opinion to be easily accessed more widely across Congregation membership. Congregation can trigger a postal vote after a debate (but not after a discussion or a question and reply where no vote is taken). 25 or more members of Congregation have to be present (“on the floor”) at the relevant debate. The request must be made by 4pm on the 6th day after the debate, signed by 50 members of Congregation, in writing to the Registrar. Council can also decide to hold a postal ballot, by the same deadline.

### *Flysheets*

To generate a flysheet for publication with the *Gazette*, the camera-ready copy (2 sides maximum) should be submitted with at least 10 signatures on an indemnity form (obtainable from the Registrar) by 10am on the Monday in the week in which publication is desired.

Regulations governing the conduct of business in Congregation can be found at: <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/statutes/regulations/529-122.shtml>

Items placed on the agenda for Congregation are published in the *Gazette*.

The Congregation website is at: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/governance/congregation).

Advice on Congregation procedures is available from the Council Secretariat on request (email: [congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:congregation.meeting@admin.ox.ac.uk)).

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# What Happened Next?

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*Oxford Magazine* in Noughth Week of last term (No. 464) was a response to the suddenly announced reforms to the process of electing a new Chancellor. The problems raised by these reforms – and the consequences – have turned out to be complex, surprising and worrying. Were the successively revised announcements in the *Gazette* and the soon-to-be challenged aspects of the text the results of failures of adequately thought-through planning in Wellington Square or just poor communication? What went wrong, how did it go wrong and what are the implications?

The Council Notice that appeared in the *Gazette* – entirely without any prior warning – was bound to prompt suspicion and resistance. It referred to equality and diversity. It read as though it was an administrative takeover of the pre-existing simple, open and democratic process, whereby a new, unelected central committee could vet – or perhaps even pre-select – candidates. The predictable results were leaks to the press, alarmist stories and lurid headlines.

What was missed in all this was the way in which Congregation was given barely four working days to raise objections, this being in part the result of a quite extraordinary failure in the *Gazette* containing the announcement (21st March) to mention the option for the raising of objections by Congregation (nor was Congregation given any deadline for doing so). (Opposition by Congregation has by Regulation to be raised within eleven days of such a Council Notice). The errors were corrected on 26th March. The deadline was now given as Monday, April 1st (a bank holiday).

How did these administrative errors occur and who was responsible? Perhaps what happened reflects a growing dysfunction of the administrative apparatus due to its sheer complexity and the innumerable committees and officers that have to be consulted. Perhaps we should be told. The impression created was that of a *fait accompli* and that this was not a matter that Congregation needed to concern itself with.

The short deadline meant that organising a notice of opposition was going to be difficult in itself and not a foregone conclusion. What happened next was a chaotic recruitment of Congregation members willing to sign a motion of opposition, few of whom had previously been involved in such a process. First they had to work out that twenty signatures would be needed and that signatures could not be submitted digitally; paper copies had to be delivered to Wellington Square by a certain date and time.

In the meantime Roger Teichmann raised his concerns with the Registrar whose responses were published in part (with permission) in the *Magazine*. Further email exchanges took place involving the Vice-Chancellor, who also met with one or two of the concerned members of Congregation. It seems to have been in response to those discussions that the Vice-Chancellor undertook to modify the Notice. She may have been influenced by the unwelcome possibility of an action in Congregation. The new version of the Notice appeared in the 4th week *Gazette* this term. It met the objections sufficiently that most of the signatories-in-waiting elected to leave matters there.

T.J.H

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## Freedom of expression and protest on university property

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G.R.EVANS

On 18 May, with a degree ceremony scheduled, Oxford Action for Palestine (OX4P) protesters in red-splashed white shirts lay splayed in a ‘die-in’ at the entrances to the Clarendon and Bodleian quads and the Radcliffe Camera. *The Oxford Student* reported that:

*‘the protesters assembled on Cattle Street before marching around the Clarendon building onto Broad Street. They sat on the steps outside the Sheldonian Theatre and put their red hand-print-painted shirts on the gates. The shirts were taken off after the protesters took photos with them.’<sup>1</sup>*

There were headlines with pictures in the press. Gates to the Sheldonian and Clarendon quadrangles were subsequently kept locked.

*Cherwell* interviewed OA4P on 27 May. A ‘spokesperson’ for the Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) press team spoke exclusively to *Cherwell* to say that it was ‘not stopping’ until ‘the Vice-Chancellor meets our demands and meets us for negotiations’. ‘That is our number one priority’. On the occupation of the University offices three weeks ago, they said that ‘protestors did not go into a peaceful sit-in expecting to be arrested’.

*The Oxford Student* published an account of a teach-in

by four panelists on what is happening in Gaza and the question of its future, bringing together several areas of current wider concern that ‘the speakers suggested underlay the protesters’ ‘demands’: ‘the settler colonial rule that Palestine faces’; ‘the environmental concerns arising within the context of historic attitudes of colonialism and oppression’ and the ‘power dynamics, between the occupied, indigenous community and the occupier’, as ‘part of a very broad American funded, Zionist structure’.<sup>2</sup>

The call for the Vice-Chancellor to engage in ‘dialogue’ so as to ‘meet demands’ continued during the season of Gaza protests during the term. On 27 May an ‘Open Letter from concerned Jewish Faculty’ to the Vice-Chancellor called on her to ‘engage in meaningful, good-faith dialogue with protesting students.’<sup>3</sup> (Oxford’s Jewish Students for Justice (JSJ) also released a statement on which *Cherwell*’s article commented).<sup>4</sup>

The protesters, student or staff, do not seem to have read their copies of the Statutes *and Regulations* so as to find out how decisions are made in the University and the limited powers of a Vice-Chancellor. Statute IV and its accompanying Regulations would tell them that to get a ‘decision’ they would need the signatures of twenty members of Congregation to create a Resolution and that would provide an opportunity for ‘dialogue’ at a meeting of Congregation.

Nor perhaps have the protesters caught up with the Congregation Question published in the *Gazette* of 23 May which asked about the University ‘committing resources’ to ‘helping to rebuild the universities of Gaza’ and meanwhile variously supporting higher education there. The Council’s published reply is that a good deal is already being done, but it suggests it is ‘too early to plan for the rebuilding of Gaza’s universities’ though there have been ‘initial conversations across Universities UK’ including Oxford ‘about the sector coming together to work on this’.

The process of consideration of the Question took its constitutional course, with a meeting of Congregation to discuss it held on 28 May.<sup>5</sup> In a circular Message on 30 May the Vice-Chancellor referred to ‘the very respectful, courteous and constructive dialogue’ at that Congregation and listed the topics raised and the efforts the University has been making to address them. ‘Across all of this work, we need to come together as a community’ she said, calling on ‘departments, colleges and individual colleagues’ to ‘please come forward and contribute to our collective efforts’. Wellington Square could not do it ‘alone’.

The protesters also seem unaware that Heads of House too have no powers because the powers lie with their Fellows. Heads of House appointed from outside the University have been known to express puzzlement and indignation when they find that to be the case. On 27 May the *Oxford Student* reported JCR criticism of the Heads of House of Balliol, Hertford, St. Anne’s and Somerville for supporting the University’s stated position, again perhaps not having read the respective Colleges’ Statutes.<sup>6</sup>

### Cambridge protests

The protesters in Oxford and Cambridge have been liaising, once launching action on the same day. In Cambridge too decision-making of the sort the protesters there have

been calling for ultimately lies with the Regent House. Its Statute A,II provides for its investment decisions to be controlled by Ordinance and Statute A,III places the necessary legislative powers to create Ordinances in the Regent House which it does by approving a Grace.

On 15 May *Varsity* reported that a Cambridge protest group encamped at the gates giving entrance to the Old Schools quadrangle had tried to prevent workers in the Old Schools gaining entry to the building. When Cambridge’s counterpart Pro-Palestine encampment moved from King’s College land in King’s Parade to the Senate House lawn it was promptly ‘dismantled’ after negotiations were agreed, as reported on 20 May.<sup>7</sup> But that did not put a stop to ‘action’. *Varsity* reported an episode on 21 May when a separate group, King’s Cam for Palestine (KC4P) ‘disrupted a panel discussion at King’s College’<sup>8</sup> and another on 23 May when ‘Workers from Lion’s Yard and the Grand Arcade staged a walkout’ in ‘solidarity with the Cambridge for Palestine (C4P) encampment’.<sup>9</sup>

Cambridge has no counterpart to Congregation Questions. Its nearest provision is a call for a Discussion on a Topic of Concern which requires ten signatures of members of the Regent House to call it. That makes provision for speakers to make their remarks on the matter, to be published verbatim in the *Reporter* in the following week. No such Discussion has yet been called for on the definition of a line not to be crossed in a protest or encampment, or whether and how ‘the University’ may intervene when a protest or encampment is deemed to cross that line.

### *The universities’ protocols governing freedom of expression*

Both Oxford.<sup>10</sup> and Cambridge<sup>11</sup> put out policy statements about the right to protest in the University in present circumstances. There has been a test. On 23 May protesters forced entry to Oxford’s University Offices, assaults were reported, the police were called and seventeen arrests were made for assault and aggravated trespass. A *Police Statement* of 24 May confirmed that ‘Thames Valley Police has made several arrests following a protest at Oxford University:

*‘In addition to these arrests we dealt with protesters in the immediate vicinity of Wellington Square. Elements of this protest sought to obstruct the removal of the persons arrested. These protests have been peaceful and no arrests were made. We are still managing a small peaceful protest in the city.’*

An all-staff circular sent as a *University Response to Encampment and Protests* in the light of this development described ‘forced entry and temporary occupation of a section of the University Offices on Wellington Square’ as ‘causing significant distress for members of reception staff and the wider staff community’. This, it said, was ‘a violent action that included forcibly overpowering the receptionist, and then entry into the Vice-Chancellor’s office while she was on a call, shouting and starting to barricade the doors’. The protesters, it added, had ‘demanded to “enter negotiations”’, though negotiations were under way.

However they were now adding ‘a series of pre-conditions, including progress towards six demands’ with a ‘threat of escalation for non-compliance’. Again there

was wide press coverage<sup>12</sup> and on 23 May *Cherwell* reported an OA4P protest outside Keble ‘attempting to force doors open and pull the fire alarm, while police evacuate residents of the building through a back door’, while the Conference of Colleges was meeting in the H.B. Allen Centre.<sup>13</sup>

Commenting on these events the *University Bulletin* explained that ‘University senior leadership shares the horror at events in Gaza which continue to unfold by the day’ and is doing its best to listen and talk and ensure that students and colleagues ‘get the support they need’. However, it noted, there are ‘emergency protocols’ to respond to forcible entry into University buildings, especially ‘when those involved are concealing their identities’. A short further protest took place in Wellington Square on 30 May.<sup>14</sup>

Both Universities have longstanding rules about permitted entry to and activity in University or College land and buildings. As the protesters stormed the University Offices, the *Gazette* of 23 May, then just published, was proposing adjustments to Oxford’s Statute XI. The revisions were chiefly intended to comply with ‘a new regulatory requirement for a single document that addresses harassment and sexual misconduct by moving as much detail as possible into a single procedure and out of Statute and Regulations’, but also ‘flow from Education Committee’s decision in Trinity term 2023 to widen the Proctors’ jurisdiction to investigate more cases of serious misconduct’.<sup>15</sup>

Statute XI defines the ‘university context’ as including ‘on university or college premises’ and ‘in the course of university activity within or outside Oxford whether academic, sporting, social, cultural, or other’. Should unacceptable action prompt it, ‘suspension’ means withdrawal of ‘the right of access to all of the land, buildings and facilities of the University’. Recent protesters are recorded as including non-members of the University. If police were to be involved in any ‘decision to interfere’ the University or a College would normally have to invite them in but this happened in a public place. Oxford University arguably made a ‘decision to interfere’ when it called in the police when Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) forced its way into the University Offices on 23 May.

On 31 May Oxford students circulated a Brief on Illiberal Amendments to the University of Oxford Statutes, reflecting a closer study of the Statutes on the authors’ part.. It describes the announcement of proposed adjustments to Statute XI in the *Gazette* of 23 May and ‘the process for approval of the amendments. It then turns to ‘changes of concern’, appearing ‘to be illiberal and anti-democratic’, by ‘imposing vague and impractical restrictions on staff and students’ and increasing ‘the severity of the consequences of violations’. These are detailed in the Brief, whose author or authors are not identified. The question is whether the amendments to Statute XI are intended to to limit freedom of expression or to clarify its boundaries, that is, whether they can properly be construed as repressive or should be seen as protective.

Cambridge’s Statute D covers ‘due maintenance of good order and discipline within the University’, but chiefly in connection with the operation of the University Courts. Its Rules of Behaviour are Regulations of the General Board. These cover students and former students and others, who may not ‘occupy without appropriate permission any University or College property or prem-

ises, or any property or premises accessed as a result of a College or University activity’; ‘interfere in the freedom of speech or lawful assembly of a member of the collegiate University community or visitor to the University’; ‘damage or misappropriate property belonging to a member of the collegiate University community; or belonging to anyone within the precincts of the University or during the course of a University or College activity’. A ‘College or University activity’ is defined as ‘an academic, sporting, social or cultural activity either within the Precincts of the University or elsewhere in the context of a person’s membership of the University’.<sup>16</sup>

The question whether ‘freedom of speech’ includes such freedom of action construed as a ‘statement’ is prompting further thought. Freedom of speech provision still underpinned by *Education (No.2) Act* (1986), s.43 (3), overlaps with requirements permitting the putting of lawful but unpopular opinions on ‘premises of the establishment’ and ‘other activities’ taking place ‘on those premises and which fall within any class of activity so specified’, including by invited external speakers. It also requires the ‘establishment’ to ‘specify the conduct required of such persons in connection with any such meeting or activity’.

In Cambridge a *Report on the University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech* published on 15 May grappled with the increasing complexities of creating a Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, as required under the *Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act* (2023) so as to update and bring into a single document the three existing University-level documents about freedom of speech: the University Statement on Freedom of Speech, the Code of Practice on Meetings and Public Gatherings on University Premises, and the University Free Speech Principles. ‘Purely commercial meetings or events on University premises’ will be excluded from the new Code.

In May *Advance HE* published its *Guidance* on ‘Protected Beliefs in Higher Education’. This covers matters which have gained a new sharpness as a result of the Gaza conflict, the widespread student encampments in support of Palestine and complaints of anti-semitism in universities. It includes advice for institutions on the circumstances in which it may be tempting to make a ‘decision to interfere’ with an exercise of free speech including speech about ‘protected beliefs’.<sup>17</sup>

### *What happens next?*

It seems unlikely that protesters in either Oxford or Cambridge will leave it there. They have been thinking in terms of ‘demands’. A representative of Oxford Action for Palestine (OA4P) told *The Oxford Student* that it was:

*‘disrupting the graduation ceremonies because the University has stayed silent to their demands, and that they aim to disrupt the graduations ‘peacefully’ and ‘silently’.*

OA4P says it has ‘requested several times for engagement and submitted demands formally but received no response from the University’. It had chosen to lay siege to the Clarendon Building on the grounds that it housed the ‘offices’ of the Vice-Chancellor and others. ‘There can be no business as usual’. The University ‘must not be allowed to forget this, and we will escalate to disrupt its functioning until they join us at the negotiating table and until our



demands are met'. It said it was 'committed to continued mobilisation' if the University continues to stay silent'.<sup>18</sup>

When Cambridge's Pro-Palestine encampment moved to the Senate House lawn negotiations were agreed.<sup>19</sup> *Varsity* commented on 29 May on what had happened next. There had been, it said,;

*'Over three hundred protesters had held a rally (28/05) on King's Parade in solidarity with the Cambridge for Palestine (C4P) encampment, calling on the University to divest from companies associated with Israel.'*

This had been followed by a 'silent vigil for the martyrs' in memory of the dozens of Palestinians killed in Israeli airstrikes on Rafah the previous day:

*'During the vigil participants wrote the names of dead Palestinians onto banners, and carried an "all eyes on Rafah" banner in condemnation of the attacks. The vigil was held in silence, with protesters at the rally commenting on the "sombre mood" at the camp following attacks on Rafah.'*

In the 'negotiations' between C4P and the University over their demands for divestment from Israel, it said, 'no progress has been announced by either party'. College JCRs had been issuing statements.<sup>20</sup>

Are the rules of engagement about protest on University property standing up to the current tests in either Oxford or Cambridge?

1. <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2024/05/18/gaza-die-in-at-sheldonian-attempt-to-disrupt-graduation-ceremony/>
2. <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2024/05/27/the-elimination-of-palestinian-futures-what-i-learned-at-the-ox4ps-environmental-teach-in/>
3. [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MD9JNXeQ\\_FrFSeTM-JweYnI9VuL-mRt75/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MD9JNXeQ_FrFSeTM-JweYnI9VuL-mRt75/view) and see <https://cherwell.org/2024/05/28/jewish-faculty-critique-oxford-universitys-response-to-pro-palestine-protests-in-open-letter/>

4. *Cherwell*, 29 May 2024 <https://cherwell.org/>
5. *Congregation Regulations* 2 of 2002, s.5.
6. <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2024/05/27/heads-of-college-face-backlash-from-students-over-vice-chancellors-letter/>
7. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/>
8. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/27679>
9. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/27687>
10. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/global-crises/university-response-israel-gaza-middle-east/oxford-university-response-recent-encampment-protest#:~:text=As%20a%20community%2C%20we%20are,the%20boundaries%20of%20the%20law.>
11. <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/statement-on-the-protests>
12. <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/police-arrest-16-pro-palestinian-sit-cleared-oxford> and <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24340276.uni-oxford-building-lock-down-sixteen-arrested/>
13. <https://cherwell.org/2024/05/23/students-arrested-during-ox4p-sit-in-at-university-offices/>
14. <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24355727.oxford-university-palestine-protesters-return-arrests/>
15. *Gazette*, 23 May.
16. *Statutes and Ordinances*, p.196.
17. <https://documents.advance-he.ac.uk/download/file/document/10736> and <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2024/05/16/advance-he-ceo-alison-johns-how-our-new-guidance-on-protected-beliefs-will-help-on-free-speech-issues/>
18. <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2024/05/18/gaza-die-in-at-sheldonian-attempt-to-disrupt-graduation-ceremony/>
19. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/>
20. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/>

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# No investigation without representation

## The missing voice of Early Career Researchers

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JESÚS ANTONIO SILLER FARFÁN

1. *The proportion of researchers working on fixed-term contracts is too high. The starting point for any policy should be to reduce this proportion.*
2. *It reflects poorly on all concerned that the problems caused by the increasing numbers of CRS [Career Research Staff] were identified many years ago but so few of them have been solved.*
3. *We would like a world where good researchers were successful on merit and less subject to an academic lottery.*
4. *The Concordat and the Research Careers Initiative have focused on managing the problem rather than solving it.*
5. *It seems that some universities will do little positive to address the issue of CRS unless forced by law or financial penalty.*

(Conclusions of the Eighth Report of the Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology (2002))

I am not oblivious to the efforts conducted by the Central University whilst establishing the Researcher Hub and adhering to the third iteration of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers<sup>1</sup>. Early Career Researchers (ECRs) can find some useful resources whilst browsing the Researcher Hub portal. Besides, having something is arguably better than having nothing. Nonetheless, the University and the Researcher Hub need to ask themselves why, according to the 2023 Staff Experience Survey, only a paltry 31% of the Research Staff (RS) is aware of the Concordat. The fact that less than half (42%) of the same staff group is even aware of the existence of the Researcher Hub can only be taken as a worrying sign when assessing the success of this initiative. At the time of writing these lines (06-06-2024) I also note that the 2024 Annual Report for the Concordat is nowhere to be seen. If the very webpage of the Concordat is something to go by<sup>3</sup>, Oxford was meant to publish its 2024 Annual Report by the end of April, as this was the month when the original 2022-2025 Action Plan was published<sup>4</sup>. Out of sight, out of mind?

The voice of ECRs is also dampened because of the extraordinary complexity in the representative structures for researchers.<sup>5</sup> For a pressing concern to be heard – let alone addressed – by one of the main committees that report to Council, it needs to travel through:

- departmental and/or Faculty representatives,
- the appropriate Divisional Forum and,
- multiple Research Staff committees, including the RS Working Group (RSWG), the RS Consultation Group (RSCG), and the RS Steering Committee (RSSC).

The aberrations and abbreviations do not stop there. I can only speak about the case of Medical Sciences Division (MSD). In this case, the topics discussed at the MSD Research Staff Forum (MSDRSF) can only be tabled at the absolute discretion of the MSD Research Staff Forum Steering Group (MSDRSFSG). And, when the MSDRSFSG exercises such discretion, which they have done in the past, this prevents motions from being discussed at the MSDRSF and therefore considered by the RSWG, the RSCG, and the RSSC. By the point one has convinced the MSDRSFSG to reconsider its position and the motion has travelled across the magnificent *GRSP* (*Great Research Staff Pyramid*), your average postdoc has been dismissed because their fixed term contract came to an end.

It needs not be this way. This University benefits from a most remarkable mechanism to enable self-governance and to hear the voice of its members: it is called Congregation, and its constitution and mechanisms are laid out in Statute IV and Congregation Regulations 1 and 2 of 2002. Congregation is oftentimes thought of as a “rheumatic elephant”, a phrase commonly used by the current President of México when describing any bureaucratic apparatus. However bad the rheumatism of Congregation might be, it has been a remarkably active body during this academic year. From tempering the inappropriate reforms to the Chancellorship election<sup>6</sup>, to challenging Council’s investment practices<sup>7</sup>, to tabling oppositions, adjournments, and counter-reforms<sup>8</sup>, Congregation is running circles around the GRSP.

The vast majority of postdoctoral researchers (grade 7) do not enjoy undisputed rights to Congregation mem-

bership; the ‘traditional’ definition of Congregation encompasses “all Oxford academic staff, and more senior academic-related staff”<sup>9</sup>. Their voices are drowned in the infinite chambers of the GRSP. I am therefore posing the following questions to all readers of this article, and I would honestly appreciate your thoughts on this matter (responses to: [jesus.sillerfarfan@path.ox.ac.uk](mailto:jesus.sillerfarfan@path.ox.ac.uk)). I tend to see matters through the lens of the MSD, so I will welcome different perspectives – even if they clash with mine:

1. What is the exact justification for considering ECRs as academic-related (as opposed to academic) staff? This definition introduces a bar (grade 8) that does not apply to academics. We are protected by Statute XII, which already defines us as academic staff. We all conduct teaching through informal arrangements when supervising students, and a sizeable proportion of us do so through formal mechanisms (tutorials, seminars, lectures, etc.).
2. Would the man on the Clapham omnibus consider an ECR to be an academic, or someone who is simply academic-related? What about the fair-minded and informed observer, or the moron in a hurry?
3. Why, exactly, is it a problem if Congregation gets bigger?<sup>10</sup> In a world where Council can arrange voting for some 300,000 Convocation members across the world, it can do so for a larger Congregation. In fact, it is high time for Council to embrace the advantages of 21st century technology, as I have stated in the past<sup>11</sup> and as Cambridge already does for Regent House<sup>12</sup>.
4. What is the point of the grade 8 bar in the case of ECRs? The correlation between job opportunities at grade 8 and keywords such as “Quantitative”, “Bioinformatics” or “AI” is – let’s be candid – difficult to ignore<sup>13</sup>. Sure: correlation doesn’t imply causation, but it does “waggle its eyebrows suggestively and gesture furiously while mouthing ‘look over there’” (from<sup>14</sup>).

In summary: why shouldn’t ECRs, one of the largest constituencies in this University, have a voice and a vote in Congregation? I do not pretend that Congregation membership will magically solve the challenges faced by ECRs. I do, however, posit that Congregation membership will grant ECRs an effective voice and a deserved vote. Genuine change ought to start here and now.

1. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub>

2. <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/staff-experience-survey-1>

3. <https://researcherdevelopmentconcordat.ac.uk/reporting-guidance/>

4. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/University%20of%20Oxford%20Concordat%20Action%20Plan%202022.pdf>

5. <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/support-researchers/researcher-hub/research-staff-committees>

6. See this volume of the *Oxford Magazine* and that of 0th week, Trinity Term 2024.

7. *Gazette* No. 5422, 23 May 2024, p. 463.

8. *Gazette* No. 5424, 6 June 2024.

9. See: <https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/congregation>. Admittedly, this definition is not a statutory one.

10. Keep in mind that only c50% of the indisputably entitled staff are actual members of Congregation. Entitlement does not equate enrolment, although I still maintain that a larger Congregation should not be a con-

cern. In fact, I would go as far as favouring automatic enrolment.

11. *Oxford Magazine*, 0th week, Trinity Term 2024.

12. <https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/governance/decision-making/discussions/Pages/default.aspx>

13. <https://jobs.ox.ac.uk/>

14. <https://xkcd.com/552/>

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# Empty Elections

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PETER OPPENHEIMER

There are quite a few ways in which an election process may lack effectiveness, either totally or in large part. One way is the Vladimir Putin presidential type, where the process admits no opposition or alternative to the single effective candidate. Another is, interestingly, the British General Election forthcoming on 4th July. Decisive defeat is likely for the incumbent Conservative government, but there is little clarity as to the colour of its successor, because of vagueness in electoral platforms coupled with uncertainties about the precise composition of the post-electoral majority in Parliament.

A third, more parochial variety has been exemplified at Oxford University during the present Trinity Term, with elections to Council, whose current structure we owe to the North Commission some twenty five years ago. Batches of candidates, mostly from academic constituencies, have put themselves forward and issued electioneering statements.

Time has shown that elected members of Council have no significant legislative or executive power. They are participants in a rubber-stamping process, through which Council – sometimes at the prompting of one of its subordinate committees – signs off policies determined by the University’s central administration aka Wellington Square. There is space for nothing more, given the infrequency of Council meetings (twice in Full Term) and the associated magnitude of its agendas. Members elected by Congregation are in any case a minority, due to the majority made up of “external” members and central administrators appointed ex officio or co-opted. The four Heads of Division have a vote, if on very rare occasions votes are taken; an extra layer of central administration in the form of Divisions exists to separate faculty groups from one another and to reduce grass-roots policy-making across the University’s faculty structure.

As is frequently underlined in *Oxford Magazine* Leaders, the one vehicle through which the academic com-

munity can nowadays make its opinions known – and occasionally effective – is the sovereign assembly of Congregation. The latter’s procedures, however, are also heavily weighted against grass-roots initiatives. There is, in the first place, no regular or automatic debating of measures that issue from the central administration. Rather, a minimum number of Congregation members needs to sign up well ahead of time to secure such debate.

In the case of yet another forthcoming election, to the University’s Chancellorship, new policies were announced during a University vacation. As past experience has shown, this increases the likelihood either of the announcement passing unnoticed or else of the mobilisation of counter-moves proving impractical. The announcement in question stated that a new unelected central committee would issue the list of approved candidates. Potential objectors have allowed themselves to be seen off simply by the removal from the relevant decree of an explicit reference to Inclusion and Diversity.

At this time of political uncertainty and financial unpredictability rigorous and open oversight of University funds is more necessary than ever. Many key financial decisions are made by the administration without any involvement of Congregation and without prior notice. To be sure, some decisions, such as construction of the new Physics and Life Sciences buildings, meet with general approval. But many others do not, and opposition is prevented by fear of victimisation. The financial health of the University depends ultimately on academic strength and success. There is as yet no shortage of applicants either for academic posts or for student places at Oxford. The latter include expensive one-year taught courses of mixed quality for graduates from overseas. Standards (of teaching and of examinations) may have plummeted in the twenty-first century, but so they have elsewhere. Reputation lingers, and is to some extent self-sustaining – but for how long



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## The Dove

I would rather a graph than you, river-lined bird,  
hinged on fraying feathers, felt and silk,  
sodden and smoothed by the flux  
underneath. Not a flood

of silver, cow parsley and rivulets, but one that  
churns out the muck and mud on the bed  
so nothing in the water is not  
murky, impossible to tell.

How you might be some weight, holding  
the currents as a helmsman: how you might  
fall from the sky in an instant,  
releasing yourself from your image.

Stream-bowed bird, how even maths cannot prove  
your mystery: you look so little like peace.  
Could you not be more plotted, more like a cow,  
head to the ground and the smell of soil?

But then the heart looks nothing like  
love and its toil, and in the dove's nest there are  
two birds, two atria.  
Doves and hearts: I cannot keep their pace,

nor keep them apart. Now I too have frayed:  
it is impossible to keep peace  
in words. Strange-looking things,  
strewn (I hope) with untameable currents.

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## Dress on the washing line

Lantern in the middle of the day,  
In the middle of everything.  
I have put you there.

The garden suspects you as  
You obscure it, wanting  
More of the view than

You deserve. There is some  
Human in you, like a disease.  
Yes, this is a diagnosis.

I set my watch  
By your undulations, and  
Every day you send

Your representative.  
I did not ask for your dance,  
But you give it to me, and it is sin:

Like smoke, and things  
That don't have an outline.  
Or memory: every dance

Feels worse than the one before,  
A shock.  
Those poison movements,

As if a dog had bitten you, and then—  
As if you were an angel that taunts  
And bites back. You are haunted;

You are a ghost, desperate  
For a body that would live in it.  
You are never satisfied with my eyes,

It is fat you want.  
This is all will,  
A crime of passion.

Without you, I am naked,  
But carrying you makes me mad.  
Watching you is worse.

Fly as a flag, if you like.  
I will be a cynic, live in a jar,  
Just as you have taught me to.

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## The Peonies Will Not Bloom

I think they will be pink,  
I think they will be pink,  
peering out of the glass like  
a horse from a stable.

From their near-wet noses,  
I feel a lofty breath in two,  
a mirror of the lungs  
from which it came.

Healthy,  
that they hold so much.

Wrapped tight  
in a green leaf, as if  
wounds about to heal,  
at risk of damage

from an unknown source.  
(Still,  
they will not bloom  
they will not bloom.)

What an itch, a scab—  
the unborn flower!

And what seduction:  
to be forever  
anything, always  
on the brink—

a rose might appear.  
(I think they will be pink)

I think they might be  
red, or yellow, or white.  
Stay closed, my darling buds,  
stay tight.

RUTH THRUSH

Ruth Thrush is a writer based in Birmingham. She is currently writing about Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, and will return to Oxford in October to start a DPhil in English.

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# The Last M.A.

or, a short work dedicated to those fortunate possessors of the most honourable degree in the English-speaking world, past and present, whose ranks the author has the privilege of augmenting.

“Strictly speaking an Oxford man never takes his M.A., for there is no ceremony of institution; he is ‘licensed’ to take part in a ceremony which has ceased to exist.”<sup>1</sup>

Not for me the German degrees,<sup>2</sup>  
or the tawdry *ad vos spectent*;<sup>3</sup>  
but for honourable inception I bent the knee,  
for the M.A. (Oxon.) I was suppliant.

A scrap of crimson adorns my back,  
My tunic, now green, is not quite *talaris*.<sup>4</sup>  
but the mother whose boon I pleased to pack  
is swallowed up by avarice.

What of the Regency, the right of the ‘senior degree’?<sup>5</sup>  
Where is the duty to examine and determine  
the white-clad and eager-eyed, and to decree  
the black-robed to preferment?<sup>6</sup>

I rejoice to share a name  
with those who these halls once trod,  
who have built her far-flung fame,  
and have made glad the fair cities of God.<sup>7</sup>

Many have proceeded, uncaring,  
many more shall never proceed,  
but shall I who was admitted, bible-bearing,<sup>8</sup>  
take up this ruinous creed?

Shall I betray this hallowed shrine,  
Shall I with the chorus condemn?  
Shall I discern for the final time:  
*Dissolvimus hanc Convocationem*?<sup>9</sup>

A thousand years of learning,  
a thousand years a guild;<sup>10</sup>  
what right have I in yearning  
to be the last her rights to build?

ALEXANDER YEN

Alexander Yen is a graduate student at Green Templeton College and recently proceeded to his MA. His interests include university ceremonial and traditions.

1. Wells, *The Oxford Degree Ceremony*.
2. The modern research degrees originate in 19th-century Germany, which Oxford was late in adopting.
3. The traditional conclusion to the oath sworn before the Proctors by all candidates for degrees other than the higher doctorates and the M.A.
4. The former statutory length of an academic gown, to the ankle.
5. The M.A. confers seniority at Oxford, and in former times a period of necessary regency began after the degree was taken, when the new graduate took their part in instruction and administration in the university.
6. Nomination of candidates for graces and elections to University offices being contained in the M.A.’s oath, neither of which duties the M.A. now has the exclusive right to perform in virtue of that degree.
7. Psalms 46:4.
8. The Christian formula for admission to the degree, for which there is now a secular alternative, involves the candidate being tapped on the head with a copy of the New Testament.
9. ‘We dissolve this Convocation’, the formula with which the Vice-Chancellor closes the House.
10. On the supposition that the medieval, organised, university was essentially a guild of Masters of Arts.

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# Eugenics as enlightened social policy

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*In the previous issue of the Magazine Anthony Edwards gave an account of the accusations of support for Nazi "eugenicists" which have contributed to the recent negative (and often inaccurate) re-appraisal of Ronald Fisher's role in promoting eugenics.*

*The following is an account of his – in reality enlightened – view of the way in which the broad aims of eugenics could be implemented. It is extracted by the editor from material supplied by Professor Edwards - eds*

In 1926 Fisher published 'Eugenics: can it solve the problem of the decay of civilisations?', originally an address in French given in Paris. It is Fisher's first full account of his proposal for family allowances which he was to promote tenaciously for the next seventeen years. He stresses the consequences of a system of flat-rate family allowances but it is 'beyond the scope of the present article' to question its 'intricate' 'effects upon the hereditary constitution of future generations'.

Once started at Rothamsted Fisher devoted his time to the development of the statistical mathematics for which he became famous. In 1925 he published *Statistical Methods for Research Workers*, the most influential statistics book of all time, while the companion volume *The Design of Experiments* based directly on his work at Rothamsted was published in 1935, two years after he had moved to University College London as Galton Professor of Eugenics. For the most part he set aside any thoughts of continuing with the book he had started just before his Rothamsted appointment, but in 1928 he took up the work again, encouraged by Leonard Darwin, son of Charles and a leading advocate of eugenics. It was to become *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection* and to incorporate, in its last five chapters, the mature development in Fisher's mind of the idea planted there in 1913 by a paper in the *Eugenics Review* by J.A. Cobb.

Fisher's 1926 paper mentioned above was a first published look at the problems he was to consider in Chapters VIII to XII of *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection*. These chapters have tended to be neglected, pilloried or cited as racist or 'classist', in spite of Fisher's protests that they are an integral part of 'the genetical theory of natural selection' as it applies to Man and his social history.

Each chapter starts with a short list of contents and ends with a Summary. Chapter VIII 'Man and society' sets the scene including comparisons with social insects. Chapter IX 'The inheritance of human fertility' considers 'the great variability of human reproduction', the 'direct evidence for the inheritance of fertility' and 'the evolution of the conscience respecting voluntary reproduction'. Chapter X 'Reproduction in relation to social class' examines the 'economic and biological aspects of class distinctions' and discusses the fact that in Europe and the United States there is an 'inversion of the birthrate' with respect to the prosperity of families, the wealthier having the fewer children. 'Those who can afford most of comforts and luxuries can assuredly afford to have the most children, and upon purely economic grounds ... the large households of the rich might be reasonably expected to produce and

support more children than the small households of the poor'. 'The total burden of rearing the next generation of citizens would be more easily borne, if distributed more in accordance with the ability to support it'. Chapter XI 'The social selection of fertility' describes the crux of Fisher's eugenic concerns.

Fisher summarizes the theory as follows:

*'Restricting himself to the unconscious causes of relative infertility, Mr. Cobb points out that, just as the fortune of an heiress enables her to make a socially advantageous marriage [Galton's point that heiresses necessarily come from small families], so among the children of families of any class, members of the smaller families will on the average commence life at a social advantage compared to members of larger families. Alongside the many excellent qualities which enable a family to improve its social position, relative infertility also plays its part. In this way the less fertile stocks, having the social advantage, will gradually permeate the upper classes of society, and there cause the peculiar situation in which the more fortunate and successful of mankind have the smallest birthrate.'*

Two sections follow: 'Infertility in all classes, irrespective of its cause, gains social promotion' and 'Selection the predominant cause of the inverted birth-rate'. Fisher then continues at length with the implications of the theory for understanding 'The fact of the decline of past civilizations'.

In the long Summary to the Chapter he remarks 'The various theories which have sought to discover in wealth the cause of infertility, have missed the point that infertility is an important cause of wealth'. The short final Chapter XII 'Conditions of permanent civilization' is a call to arms for the introduction of a system of family allowances to help break the association between infertility and wealth.

Fisher considers the implications of Cobb's theory in a mature contribution to the discussion then taking place of the introduction of family allowances in Britain. Arguing against the adoption of the French system of equal child allowances paid by the employer he envisages a similar system but with the allowance being proportional to the employee's wage, and outlines the eugenic and economic advantages of such a plan. In neither case would the cost be borne by general taxation but through redistribution of the employer's wage-bill. He argues that both benefits would accrue to the long-term advantage of society through a contribution to the equalisation of the birth-rate throughout the different strata of the population.

Three of Fisher's contemporary colleagues best-qualified to comment on his book and in particular on the chapters on 'Man' were J.B.S. Haldane, Julian Huxley and Lancelot Hogben. All were on the political left, Haldane being a member of the Communist Party. Hogben was the most antagonistic to Fisher's position in both genetics and statistics, while Haldane could be relied on for vigorous and often public comment on the human condition from a genetical point of view. Haldane and Fisher, from their different political view-points, did however maintain a sort of barbed friendship with mutual scientific respect. Huxley was not quite up to the intellectual powers of the other

two but was the most friendly with Fisher. He, like Fisher, was an active member of the Eugenics Society; Haldane had been a member of the Oxford branch, while Hogben was strongly opposed.

First out of the starting-block was Haldane who in March 1931 wrote to Fisher 'I think it would be an excellent thing to present your results about eugenics in a more popular form', which indeed Fisher was to do the following year (see below). Haldane contributed a review 'Mathematical Darwinism' of the whole book to the *Eugenics Review* (23, 115-17, 1931) in which he remarked (with a nice socialist dig at the end): '[Fisher's] suggested remedy for the dysgenic character of civilized societies is a very thorough going system of family allowances on such a scale that infertility would no longer be a cause of social promotion. The reviewer considers that he has made out an extremely strong case. Indeed, if his biological facts are correct it is probable that a socialistic state in which no wealth was inherited would be more eugenic than our present society, and it is a little difficult to see why Dr. Fisher's economic views are not even more radical'. Haldane, characteristically, then gives arguments against the efficacy of Fisher's proposal, but concludes: 'Nevertheless, if Dr. Fisher is on the whole correct, civilization can only be saved by a very radical change of opinion and practice'.

Then in 1932 in his book *The Causes of Evolution* based on lectures at the University of Wales Aberystwyth in January 1931 Haldane wrote 'And the usual course taken by an evolving line has been one of degeneration. It seems to me altogether probable that man will take this course unless he takes conscious control of his evolution within the next few thousand years'. As late as 1955 Haldane said, in his Woodhall Lecture at the Royal Institution, 'I fully agree with Fisher that family allowances are a eugenic measure, but I see no possibility of a fully eugenic policy with the limits of our present economic system' (The prospects of eugenics, *Penguin New Biology* 22, 7-23, 1957). In fact, independently of Cobb's argument, Haldane never departed from the view, usually unspoken, '[the Nation] would have improved more if, say a million children who were born to unskilled labourers had been born to skilled workers, teachers and the like' (from his eulogy for Karl Pearson, *Penguin New Biology* 25, 7-26, 1958).

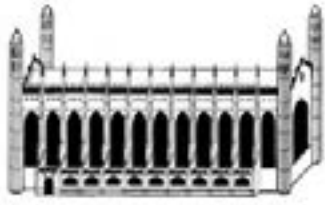
Huxley congratulated Fisher on *The Genetical Theory* by letter on 4 May 1930: 'It does seem to me the most important book on Evolution which has come out this century'. He later referred to the final chapters in his Galton Lecture of 1936: 'Then R. A. Fisher has brilliantly and devastatingly shown the relentless way in which such a system as ours promotes both infertility and certain types of talent, and in so doing ties together the genetic factors responsible. In the course of the generations - genes making for small families become increasingly bound up with those making for social and economic success; and conversely those making for social and economic failure become bound up with those making for high reproduction rates. Eugenically speaking our system is characterized by the social promotion of infertility and the excess fertility of social failures.'

In *Genetic Principles in Medicine and Social Science* (1931) Hogben wrote: (like Haldane, with a socialist dig at the end): 'R.A. Fisher has pointed out that low fertility assists materially in social advancement in societies in which mercantile or industrial interests predominate

and thrift is the supreme social merit. This might tend to concentrate individuals who are incapable of having large families in the governing classes. As a long view of the situation, Fisher's argument is worthy of attention. For the collective endowment of parenthood he makes a case which compels the serious consideration of those who are disposed to regard private enterprise as an institution sanctified by natural law.'

In 1932 Fisher returned to the subject of the social selection of human fertility and family allowances, first in an address to the Eugenics Society on 12 April 'Family allowances in the contemporary economic situation'. In this lecture he places his proposals from *The Genetical Theory* in the wider political and economic context, reminds the Society that they were incorporated in its Outline of a Practical Eugenic Policy of 'some years ago', and defends them against criticism both articulated and foreseen. He mentions the proposals of Sir William Beveridge, later incorporated in the *Beveridge Report* of 1943, for a flat-rate allowance of (say) 5s. per child per week supported by a national insurance scheme, and explains the economic reasons for preferring proportional allowances paid by the employer. (He adds that it is only fair to say ... that Sir William has established among the professors and lecturers at the London School of Economics the first English system of family allowances for university teachers.)

Next, Fisher is invited to deliver the Herbert Spencer Lecture for 1932 in Oxford, which he does on 8 June: '*The Social Selection of Human Fertility*'. This is appropriately enough a more academic discourse, with a long introduction about the phenomenon of natural causation arising from the probable behaviour of large assemblages of entities such as molecules and genes, but with the same plea as before eloquently argued. In 1933 Fisher left his post of Chief Statistician at Rothamsted Experimental Station to take up the Galton Professorship of Eugenics at University College London. It was the moment at which the subject of human genetics was detached from 'practical eugenics', which he described as 'practical action in the legislative sphere'. Under Fisher and his successors the 'Galton Laboratory' established itself as one of the world's premier departments of human genetics. In the same year the Eugenics Society issued a notice of its Aims and objects. 'Eugenics aims at improving the inborn qualities of future generations'. Under 'Positive Eugenics' a paragraph states: FAMILY ALLOWANCES: 'The Society favours the provision of family allowances by the establishment of graded equalization pools and other systems calculated to have a eugenic effect. It regards as wholly dysgenic the provision of allowances through flat rate payments by the State.' It is clear that Fisher had carried his proposal in the Society.



# Notes from Cambridge

In a counterpart to Oxford's Pay and Conditions review Cambridge is variously busy with reconsideration of its own employment arrangements. Cambridge UCU has published the results of its *Researchers Survey*.<sup>1</sup> It found that 71% of the researchers who responded to the survey were employed on fixed-term contracts. 36% of those employed in the University for ten years or more 'reported still being employed on a fixed-term basis' with a similar pattern for those employed for five years or more.

The University is seeking to launch a 'Research Career Pathway' to fit alongside its new career 'Pathways' for 'Teaching and Research', and 'Teaching and Scholarship' but there is not much to report on that as yet. A *Report* is in preparation and should be published ready for Discussion in Michaelmas Term. Meanwhile 'Teaching and Scholarship' seems to be getting off to an uncertain start. It was not welcomed when it was launched in a *Report* on 24 March, 2021 as an employment basis for something new for Cambridge. These new posts would be 'teaching-only' academics or at least appointed as 'teaching-focused'.<sup>2</sup> 'Scholarship' seemed to be defined rather uncertainly as expecting the post-holders to keep up with the latest work rather than to write the books and articles themselves. When the Professorial 'Appointments and Titles' for 2023 were published in the *Reporter* of 31 July, 2023<sup>3</sup> there were only seven at Grade 11 and four at Grade 12 for Teaching and Scholarship posts, against 50 Grade 11 Professorships and 44 for Teaching and Research.

Among those teaching for the University on insecure contracts are the supervisors of undergraduates, remunerated on an hourly basis. There is a considerable spread, some with college affiliations or posts, some without, and ranging from postdocs to University Teaching Officers. A recent Campaign for better pay and conditions<sup>4</sup> has had some success, as reported by Varsity.<sup>5</sup> In the absence of conjoint appointments College Lecturers generally have to give a number of supervisions required under their contracts. Those supervisions can be traded with other colleges to share out specialist expertise. University Teaching Officers (UTOs) may choose not have colleges at all. The Office of Intercollegiate Services has a scheme to assist colleges in gaining a UTO as a Fellow.<sup>6</sup>

Established Teaching and Research posts remain the gold standard academic job in Cambridge. These are University Offices, protected by Statute C and its Schedule, which preserves the greater part of the Model Statute created by Commissioners under the *Education Reform Act of 1988* ss.202-4. Officers are subject to Cambridge's Employer Justified Retirement Age which requires them to retire at 67.<sup>7</sup> Academic-related Officers do not seem to find this unacceptable but the University Teaching Officers certainly do.

That requirement is facing its biggest challenge yet. An *EJRA Review* was set up by the Council in February 2023, in recognition of a growing controversy. Its find-

ings were discussed by the General Board on 9 April and the Council on 24 April 2024. Its recommendations were that the EJRA should be abolished for academic-related University officers, with the exception of the offices of Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor; that the age of forced retirement should be raised to 69; that more than one extension should be allowed (though involving loss of Office and replacing it with a fixed-term contract). The Council agreed to accept them.

On May 15 a *Joint Report of the Council and the General Board on the University's Retirement Policy and Employer Justified Retirement Age* appeared in the *Reporter* setting out these recommendations, with a timetable.<sup>8</sup> This scheduled a Discussion for 28 May, a *Notice* in reply (if any) and Graces published on 12 June. The deadline for amendments to Graces (requiring 25 Regent House signatures) would be 21 June, the deadline for flysheets 27 June and voting for the ballot would run from 10-22 July. The *Reporter* would publish the results on 23 July so that those whose sixty-seventh birthdays fell this September would know whether they might after all stay until they were 69.

The Council Minute for the 24 April recognises that this would present some difficulties, some 'additional transitional costs for cases where retirees decided to continue in employment after 30 September 2024 and where replacement appointments had already been made with effect from 1 October 2024, thus effectively creating unexpected proleptic appointments'.

Meanwhile a one-hour meeting for postdocs and early career researchers was called on 4 June. It attracted fewer than two dozen attendees and most of the time was taken by the Chair of the *Review Group*, who set out in detail the way the group had gone about its work and the list of its recommendations. The thrust was strongly in favour of continuing the EJRA in its slightly amended form as proposed in the May 15 *Report*.

There were already active pressure groups, one of well over 70 members and another of about 17, the latter holding regular Zoom meetings. They called a Topic of Concern Discussion (needing ten signatures) to ensure that the abolition of the EJRA would be included in the Discussion on 28 May. This was joined for convenience with the *Report* of 15 May.

The Discussion prompted twenty-seven speeches, published in the *Reporter* of 5 June.<sup>9</sup> Members of the *Review Group* spoke in its support, commonly 'in a personal capacity', as did the Chair of the Human Resources Committee and one of its members. Several said that they had begun with open minds but become convinced of the benefits of the EJRA the *Review Group* relies on in its *Report*.<sup>10</sup> Among the other speakers were statisticians confident that they could demonstrate the unsatisfactoriness of the data repeatedly put forward to justify the claims that the EJRA provided vacancies for young academics.



This claim ran through the *Discussion* as a key repeating theme. Several speakers called for outright abolition of the EJRA, or called for it to be included among the choices in the forthcoming ballot but many, concerned for ‘intergenerational fairness’ and the need for ‘easing out senior academics in favour of younger and more junior rising stars’, tried to strike a balance. These included one member of the *Review Group* in his thirties, consciously speaking for that younger generation. He had, he said, benefitted from the ‘succession planning’ the EJRA was designed to make possible. A speaker drew attention to the fact that ‘more than 4,000 postdocs and early career academics at the University are generally, and understandably, less invested in the ongoing debates, given that the vast majority of them will not have the opportunity to participate in the ballot’, with voting confined constitutionally to members of the Regent House.

It is hard to guess the outcome of that promised ballot. The Discussion made it plain that between robust defenders of an EJRA and determined abolitionists fall a considerable number who are uneasy about either position and are likely to decide which way to vote on the basis of a process of balancing of conflicting considerations. Much will depend on whether or not the interests of younger academics are recognised and believed to be at stake. For those turning 67 this year there will be a strong motive to vote for the proposed extension to the age of 69.

G.R. EVANS

1. <https://www.ucu.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/CUCU-Cambridge-Researchers-Survey-final.pdf>
2. <https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2020-21/weekly/6612/6612.pdf>
3. [www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6711/section4.shtml#heading2-12](http://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6711/section4.shtml#heading2-12)
4. <https://www.cam.ac.uk/notices/news/an-update-from-the-university-and-colleges-on-the-justice4collegesupervisors-campaign>
5. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/27743>
6. [www.ois.cam.ac.uk/uto-scheme](http://www.ois.cam.ac.uk/uto-scheme)
7. Special Ordinance C (ii)12.
8. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6741/section3.shtml#heading2-8>
9. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2023-24/weekly/6744/section7.shtml#heading2-17>
10. <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/reporter/documents/ejra/EJRAReviewGroupReport2024.pdf>

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## Elegy

*In Memoriam A M L*

Earth lies broken  
where your calcined remnants lie,  
in this bleak graveyard  
high above the town.

A ruined church, its walls erupting ivy,  
gives little shelter to the gnarled,  
arthritic tree which clings  
to life near by, and, jagged,  
creaks desolate lament:

*ochòin....ochòin...*

Clutching at protruding rocks,  
gorse and heather climb the hill,  
and bitterly reproach the silent land  
that barely gives them living.

It is forlorn, this empty place  
you chose to have your relics laid,  
but better far than Finchley,  
where the flames consumed you.

It is well that this dissenting, barren ground  
should hold you now: you will not break out  
and blow about the grey-green nettles  
or the whins, nor enchant the hours with wit  
nor hurt with bitchiness:  
your wicked mirth is stilled.

I cannot stay to mourn you  
in this fading light: December is so cruel here,  
already freezing on your recent grave;  
but April will fire the slopes  
with flickering flecks of yellow,  
creeping up to where you are, and yet are not.

So much of you is held in memory of laughing days  
too fragile to be written down and bandied on a page.

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## Islands

*for A M K P*

A strangeness, other of that entity  
as yet unformed, insinuates, invades,  
with senses dimmed; and bitter longing trades  
unconsciousness for lost tranquillity.  
Soft voices mingle; garlands on *that* tree  
exult in colour; indigo, the skies  
above this Baltic earthly paradise,  
are mirrored in the tideless, lulling sea.

Then agonies, in waves against the shore,  
shatter dreams of distant sands in southern climes,  
where ancient wickedness returned once more,  
and *Pan the Cloven* laughed among the pines.

Elusive northern light betrays no key  
to what disturbed the day's sad mystery.

JAMES STEVENS CURL

Professor James Stevens Curl has two books in print with Oxford University Press: *Making Dystopia: The Strange Rise and Survival of Architectural Barbarism* (2018, 2019), and *The Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* (with Susan Wilson) (2015, 2016). Other books in print include *English Victorian Churches: Architecture, Faith, & Revival* (2022) and *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West* (2005).

# REVIEWS

## The current of the zeitgeist

Gavin Stamp, *Interwar British Architecture 1919-1939*. Profile Books, 2024. £40.



For many of us the dominant pictures of British architecture of the 1930s are the glistening white buildings seen in the eminently watchable and beautifully produced BBC Television Poirot series from 1989 onwards. Here is Modernism with a vengeance, and it accentuates the stylishness of the whole production. We have Oliver Hill's Joldwynds (1932) and the Midland Hotel in Morecambe (1933), Raymond McGrath's St Ann's Hill, Chertsey (1936), Thomas Wallis and ? Gilbert's Hoover Building (1933), Matthew Dawson's Burgh Island Hotel (1929, reached by an elevated sea-tractor), Eric Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff's Shrub's Wood (1934) and the De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea (1935) and R. Stavers Hessell Tiltman's Shoreham Airport (1936). The streamlined train looking like Sir Nigel Gresley's A4 Pacific Class locomotive, of which *Mallard* is the most famous example, and Giles Gilbert Scott's iconic Battersea Power Station (1933) are in the brilliant opening credits, designed by Pat Gavin.



Pat Gavin a still from the Poirot opening credits



Oliver Hill, Joldwynds (1932)



Oliver Hill, The Midland Hotel, Morecambe (1933). The mermaid was made for the T.V. production



Raymond McGrath, St Ann's Hill, Chertsey (1936)



Thomas Wallis and ? Gilbert, The Hoover Building (1933)



Matthew Dawson, Burgh Island Hotel (1929)



Eric Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff, Shrub's Wood, Chalfont St Giles (1934)



Eric Mendelsohn and Serge Chermayeff, The De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill-on-Sea (1935)

The television production team really pushed the boat out at the Midland Hotel, and recreated the murals by Eric Ravilious and his wife Tirza Garwood (she not named by Stamp though) which had decayed as quickly as the Pre-Raphaelite Oxford Union murals.



Eric Ravilious and Tirza Garwood, Murals in The Midland Hotel, Morecambe recreated for the Poirot episode Double Sin

Stamp writes that this Mark O. Dell and Herbert Lionel Wainwright photograph of David Pleydell-Bouverie's Ramsgate Airport (1937, demolished 1968) is 'one of the most telling and arresting images of British architecture of the time.' Certainly it seems to sum up the period. These Modernist buildings tend to look better in black-and-white photographs.



Mark O. Dell and Herbert Lionel Wainwright,  
David Pleydell-Bouverie's  
Ramsgate Airport (1937)

But this is only part of the story. There were, after all, relatively few of those Modernist buildings and Gavin Stamp presents a much broader picture, with all kinds of rival traditions jostling for position on the crowded little island. The focus is on two decades, but inevitably no decade will ever be hermetically sealed off, and the architecture of the interwar years carries on debates which had been going on since the nineteenth century, debates outlined in Joe Mordaunt Crook's *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural Ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern* (1987; not in the bibliography; why wasn't it published by Oxford University Press?). There was much self-conscious anguish about what a modern style should be like, with controversies as to whether classical or gothic precedents were the most helpful, and this continued in the 'twenties and 'thirties.

Stamp's study is a marvellous read, and we are much saddened to think that this excellent scholar died relatively young in 2017. *Interwar British Architecture* is published posthumously, with a warm tribute from his widow Rosemary Hill as the Foreword. Stamp was known to many as 'Piloti' of 'Nooks and Corners' in *Private Eye*, keeping an eye on the greed, crookedness, opportunism, cynicism, obtuseness, ignorance, carelessness, hubris and sheer bloody-mindedness of those in charge of our patrimony. His anger could often not be restrained, and a certain amount shows here, as he considers buildings being destroyed or vandalised.

It was the wanton destruction of Adelphi Terrace and Carlton House Terrace which prompted the foundation of the Georgian Group in 1937, and the threat to Edwin Cooper's Lloyd's of London (1928) from Richard Rogers which prompted the foundation of the Thirties Society (founded 1979), later the Twentieth Century Society – of which Stamp was the Chairman. He had broad tastes, necessary perhaps in the preservation environment, since narrow doctrinairism will fail to protect interesting structures not on one's radar. Writing on architecture is often forceful since much is at stake, witness James Stevens Curl's *The Making of Dystopia* (2018) (reviewed *Oxford Magazine*, No. 401) and his piece this term 'The Corruption of History' (*Oxford Magazine* No. 466). Stamp's study is rich in quotations from writers on architecture, and much wit is on view, as well as anger.

The complexity of the history is spelt out in chapters which concentrate on particular movements. He begins with war memorials, then goes on to consider 'The Grand Manner', 'Swedish Grace', 'Brave New World', 'Tutankhamun', 'Merrie England', 'New Georgian', 'Modern Gothic' and 'The Shape of Things to come.' All the chapters are packed with information, much of which will be new even to those who consider that they know about architecture. The names come thick and fast, and although the book is generously illustrated one often feels in need of hundreds more. It could be the basis for an excellent television series, except that it is a pity that Stamp is not there to do it.

There is much castigate and regret as one considers the period in question. For instance there was a flourishing fashion for neo-Georgian architecture between the wars, and yet actual Georgian architecture was neglected and maltreated. Beautiful buildings such as Norfolk House and Devonshire House in London were demolished to make way for inferior replacements. Siegfried Sassoon's 'Monody on the Demolition of Devonshire House' describes the process of destruction:

*'There, blankly overlooked by wintry strange  
Frontage of houses rawly-lit by change,  
Industrious workmen reconstructed quite  
The lumbered, pegged, and excavated site;  
And not one nook survived to screen a mouse  
In what was Devonshire (God rest it) House.'*



Devonshire House (1906).

It was replaced by Georgian on steroids.



Thomas Hastings and Charles H. Reilly, *Devonshire House, Piccadilly* (1926)

Sometimes perfectly good older buildings were demolished to make way for new ones. A classic case is Philip Webb's Joldwynds (1874), which was replaced by a spanking new product. Somewhat regrettable to say the least.



Philip Webb, *Joldwynds* (1874, demolished)

Decades in history cannot usually be hermetically sealed off from adjacent decades, and the 'twenties and 'thirties were no exception. The Arts and Crafts tradition goes back into the nineteenth century, as does the Tudor revival, and various principles of taste had been aired earlier. The nineteenth century was much concerned with appropriateness. So that Ruskin objected to Frederick and Horace Francis's bank on the High Street in Oxford (1866, now the Ivy Restaurant): 'It has been thought, gentlemen, that there is a fine Gothic revival in your streets of Oxford, because you have a Gothic door to your County Bank.' And when Thomas Hardy attended Charles Dilke's trial in 1886 he noted that the Gothic sculptures in the Law Courts did not accord with the stern application of justice:

*'As to the architecture of the courts, there are everywhere religious art-forces masquerading as law symbols! The leaf, flower, fret, suggested by spiritual emotion, are pressed into the service of social strife.'*

Appropriateness gets debated by Stamp. Harry Goodhart-Rendel said that 'gorgeousness is out of place in a Rates Office, grandeur ridiculous in the department of a Borough Surveyor'. In 1924 Charles Marriott used a linguistic analogy, distinguishing between 'public and private speaking, between solemn platitudes and speaking to the point.' He continues:

*'To rule out the Latin elements in our architecture would be as absurd as to rule out the Latin elements in our language, but it is a fact which anyone may observe that when a person feels strongly and is sure of his ground he tends to avoid Latinisms, and the saying "I put it to him in plain Anglo-Saxon" has an architectural application. (Modern English Architecture)'*

This is reminiscent of George Orwell's attitude to Latinisms in 'Politics and the English Language' (1946), when he recommends using 'the fewest and shortest words that will cover one's meaning'. When buildings continued to employ classical idioms with gigantic columns they were often perched above plate glass windows, and this looked absurd. This is the case, for instance with Daniel Burnham's Selfridges on Oxford Street, London (1909):

*'Selfridges... had to continue the elaborate giant colonnade marching along Oxford Street, regardless of the problem that beset architects of the time – that of combining the large plate-glass windows demanded by shopkeepers, with heavy masonry above.'*



Marriott wrote, ‘Nothing, of course, can get over the architectural anomaly of a monumental building poised on the edge of plate glass.’ Ruskin had already worried about this in. Volume I of *The Stones of Venice* (1851):

*‘In a lately built house, No. 86, in Oxford Street, three huge stone pillars in the second story are carried apparently by the edges of three sheets of plate glass in the first. I hardly know anything to match the painfulness of this and some other of our shop structures, in which the ironwork is concealed; nor even when it is apparent, can the eye ever feel satisfied of their security, when built, as at present, with fifty or sixty feet of wall above a rod of iron not the width of this page.’*

The most amusing chapter is ‘Merrie England’, which considers the popular taste for mock-Tudor. If one is committed to principles of rationality and authentic structure, then the half-timbering fastened onto semi-detached houses on estates cries out for castigation, and yet millions of people liked living in such houses, where they had the complacent feeling that they were somehow plugged into the good old days of Henry VIII. The phenomenon is studied by Paul Oliver, Ian Davis and Ian Bentley in *Dunroamin: The Suburban Semi and its Enemies* (1981). (Ian Davis’s *Experiencing Oxford* was reviewed this term in *Oxford Magazine*.)

Further up-market there were more grandiose products such as Hammels on Boars Hill, built for Sir Frederick Keeble, the Professor of Botany (not named by Stamp) (burnt down in 1973). It used recycled materials from Burghope in Herefordshire and was designed by George Blair Imrie and Thomas Graveley Angell. These buildings were on the whole really delectable and were in traditions laid down by Norman Shaw, Philip Webb and George Devey.



George Blair Imrie and Thomas Graveley Angell, Hammels, Boars Hill, Oxford (1923, destroyed by fire 1973)

Some of the houses could be settings for Agatha Christie murders, and it is worth remembering that the board-game Cluedo, in which murders have to be solved, was invented in a mock-Tudor country house – Tudor Close near Rottingdean. Was it Miss Scarlett what done it?



A Caplin, Tudor Close, Rottingdean (1928).



Cluedo. The house is an accurate representation of Tudor Close.

Georgian houses, both genuine and fake, were also popular, and now useable with the help of Thora Hird-friendly stair-lifts. Some buildings could even be mistaken for the real thing. More satisfactory than revivalist efforts were buildings which heavily modified received traditions, and here Edwin Lutyens is the hero of the narrative. Stamp treats him as a major architect. He regards the Thiepval Memorial as one of the greatest British products of the twentieth century, and regrets that his Roman Catholic Cathedral in Liverpool was never built. Instead we got Frederick Gibberd’s otiose Paddy’s Wigwam (1967).

The final chapter considers the advanced Modernist buildings. Writing about them tends to bring on strong feelings, both pro and anti. At the time Evelyn Waugh could be caustic:

*‘In a few months our climate begins to expose the imposture. The flat white walls that had looked as cheerful as a surgical sterilizing plant became mottled with damp; our east winds howled through the steel frames of the windows. The triumph of the New Architecture began to assume the melancholy air of a deserted exhibition, almost before the tubular furniture within had become bent and tarnished.’*

He chose to live in a very nice Palladian house in Combe Florey, Somerset.

Aldous Huxley could be amusingly critical too: ‘to dine off an operating table, to loll in a dentist’s chair – this is not my idea of domestic bliss.’ Paradoxically, Modernist building laid claim to efficiency, functionalism and practicality, and yet, often, they were challenging to maintain, and difficult to keep warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Flat roofs stored up problems. The architect John Fryman of Architects Design Partnership asked Herbert Hart if he could suggest a motto for the firm’s coat-of-arms, and he proposed ‘Après moi le deluge.’

A famous indictment of Modernist architecture occurred when W. H. Auden removed ‘Petition’ from his *Collected Shorter Poems 1927 – 1957* in 1966. Its final lines were ‘look shining at/ New styles of architecture, a change of heart.’ He wrote in the Foreword: ‘I once expressed a desire for “New styles of architecture”; but I have never like modern architecture. I prefer old styles, and one must be honest even about one’s prejudices.’

Oxford has some buildings from the period. At Lady Margaret Hall we find Giles Gilbert Scott, who also designed the ‘dominatingly unassertive’ and unloved New Bodleian (1937-40). Stamp is very impressed with Herbert Baker’s Rhodes House (1929), which Howard Colvin described as ‘a dinner jacket made of Harris Tweed.’ Baker, though, gets a very bad name for some of his activities, principally the hefty vandalism of the Bank of England. Perhaps the major interwar building in Oxford is Lutyens’s Campion Hall (1936). Nuffield College was planned in the ‘thirties. Austen St. Barbe Harrison at first designed a modern looking effort, but Lord Nuffield wanted something more like a Cotswold manor, and forcefully rejected the design:

*‘I consider the design to be un-English, and out of keeping with the best tradition of Oxford architecture; as well as contrary to my expressed wishes that it should be in conformity with that tradition. Indeed, I go so far as to say that if a building of this type were to be erected, I would not allow my name to be associated therewith.’*

That’s them told. One gets some idea of what the unachieved Nuffield College would have looked like by considering his Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem (1935).



Austen St. Barbe Harrison, The Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem (1927-37)



Would it have been better than what we got? Well yes, and the College would not have had to face the looming nightmare of finding Stonesfield slates when it comes time for reroofing or paying for the scaffolding to repair the spire. The chapter on modern architecture in Howard Colvin's *Unbuilt Oxford* (1983; not in the Bibliography, why wasn't it published by Oxford University Press?) depicts chambers of horrors, and one is relieved that the projects by Godfrey Samuel and Valentine Harding for Balliol College and by Maxwell Fry for All Souls remained on the drawing board. Of the All Souls proposal Colvin says, 'the failure to build it need hardly be regretted.'



Godfrey Samuel and Valentine Harding,  
*Proposal for the Broad Street Front  
for Balliol College* (1936)

A Samuel and Harding building was erected in Oxford: Overshot, South Hinksey (1937), commissioned by the art historian Sir Ellis Waterhouse. It's no great joy, and he should have known better, but at least it does not have a flat roof. If Matthew Arnold were alive he could repeat his line, 'In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same' ('Thyrsis').

My own connection to the material in *Interwar Years* is that I was brought up in a 1930s semi-detached house on an estate in Dudley. Although it did not have boards nailed to the gables to resemble half-timbering it did have the sunburst motif on the front gate. Two hundred yards away was the Red Lion (now demolished) with glazed green roof-tiles to add some colour to the Black Country. We had a sunny street party outside to celebrate VJ day. Pseudish Osbert Lancaster would have labelled it.

Dudley Zoo was near, constructed in the 'thirties by Tecton. The adventurous penguin pool (demolished in 1979) resembled the famous one also by Tecton in Regent's Park (1934). My uncle Charlie worked on the site, and came home every evening covered from head to foot in mud. The entrance was brilliant and inviting, and the bird house was a sheer delight. It is cap-

tured in a painting by the gifted local artist Percy Shakespeare (1906-1943).



Percy Shakespeare. *The Bird House, Dudley Zoo*

A short walk away was the Alhambra Cinema (demolished) where the curtains were heavy with exotic scent. I saw *Green Dolphin Street* (1947) there, unsuitable for children. It's before my time, but in nearby Kingswinford was the beautiful Tudor Bradley Hall, disgracefully demolished in 1923 and the materials shipped off by Kenneth Hutchinson Smith to Tiddington Road in Stratford-upon-Avon to make houses that look like what Osbert Lancaster would call 'stockbroker's Tudor'. Here is one of them.



*The Grange, Tiddington Road,  
Stratford-upon-Avon*



*Bradley Hall, Kingswinford*



*Bradley Hall, Kingswinford in happier days*



Sydney R. Jones, *Bradley Hall, Kingswinford*. In  
Peter Hampson Ditchfield, *The Manor Houses of  
England* (1910).

The Grange was for sale in May 2022 for £1.7 million, but anyone expecting a kitchen resembling the one in Hampton Court would be disappointed. Stamp mentions this piece of recycling. Also in Stratford was the magnificent Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, designed by Elizabeth Scott (1927). It used to give me almost as much pleasure as the plays themselves, but it was remodelled, reopening in 2010, and the lovely Art Deco foyer badly altered, with the charming ticket booths yanked up the wall, and the black leather cushions on the window-seats, where one read the sumptuous programmes, consigned to some skip. Oh woe. Elgar didn't like the building, and refused to go in. Pevsner thought it was 'very dated', but there is a difference, I think, between 'dated' (which is bad, suggesting outmodishness and redundancy) and 'dateable' (which is good). The theatre is (or was before it was messed about) dateable. Incidentally Dame Edna Everage spoke of 'Art Dago', but its origins tend to be more American, and ancient Egyptian and ancient Mayan civilizations.

Arching over all this is the challenging and melancholy question: *what, what exactly*, is the rational and attractive solution to provide food, clothing, housing, transport, heat and light for a population of nearly 70 million on this tight little island? Not architectural revivalism I think. 'Tight little island' is a phrase in chapter 6 of Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, based on a song by Thomas John Dibdin (1771-1841) in which 'snug little island' occurs. I should like to ask Starmer and Sunak, and indeed Ed Davey.

BERNARD RICHARDS

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